

# STILL LOITERING AROUND ALVALADE

Jonathan Skinner, Social Anthropologist

The casual tourist seeks out places of destruction and catastrophe to toy with disaster and stand on the very site of death. They have been visiting Lisbon since the earthquake of 1755 deemed the 'demon of terror' by Goethe and described as the first global catastrophe in the world. Indeed, walking through Lisbon is to walk over the dungeons from the Inquisition. An anonymous article in The Aldine magazine in 1872 called 'Loiterings around Lisbon' reproduces sketches of what tourists might see referring to the florid remains of the last of the Gothic – an architecture that has occult causes. Philosophers from Kant to Rousseau speculated at the time as to the cause of the earthquake. For the first time science trumped theodicy as to the cause of the quake. Here, the Alvalade Parish dates from the late 1750s when evacuees fled from the great earthquake. The current population of 30,000 in this Parish approximates the number of citizens killed in the earthquake. It is a living memorial to the prescience of natural disaster.

In the years immediately following the Great Earthquake a plan was conceived to design and build a new modern city that planned for catastrophe and learnt from disaster, one which used the straight lines and open airy streets, that considered the consequences of the seismic action and forethought escape routes. Plans were commissioned from the architects and thinkers of the time and The Santos plan became the 'Baixa Pombalina'. This made Lisbon the first Modern city, a city focused not around religious buildings. The structure of religion the institution had been fractured forever. Alvalade's present architectural design of large structures erected in a lattice structure resembles the pattern in central Lisbon of 'Pompaline buildings'. Juxtaposed, the two areas represent the earliest and some of the latest seismically protected constructions in Europe. Is it safer to be outside or inside though?

Some 200 years later the architect Jacobetty Rosa was commissioned to plan a new sector of the city to modern standards and ideals and Alvalade was borne. The urban project is based on a rectangular hierarchical grid of eight cells imposing a series of neighborhood units or zones, assigning each cell to a specific function. This exemplar of city planning ensured an open and convenient and orderly aspect for all of its residents with easy access to education, health care and spiritual guidance. Indeed, the four mistresses look down on the Statue of Saint Anthony of Lisbon (Patron of Lost Things, and the guardian of good marriages). It is said that he turns to face them in times of danger.



Behind the formal layout of the streets and the ridged and orderly street plan lies an intense network of informal dirt paths and alleyways, a relative 'underground' and regulation free zone, where a non-typical architecture is constantly evolving and sheds and concrete outhouses grow into all of the available space. A shantytown of garages line an unmetalled road, an idiosyncratic approach to architecture prevails with a scant regard to the uniformity of the buildings facades. Here, the clean lines of Jacobetty Rosa's plan has disregarded. There is a sense of 'land grab' and possession being 9/10ths the law; an allotment flourishes here, a summerhouse decays there; 2 square meters bloom behind a chain-link fence; three perfect concrete circles contain nothing but dust - the pattern of circles and rectangles could be a binary code that is best seen and deciphered from above. We have found some of the buildings of Alvalade have a nautical theme. It is as if the passengers have to climb up the fire escape to reach the funnel.

**References**  
Anon. (1872) 'Loiterings around Lisbon', The Aldine 5(2): 44-47.

## Building up & Falling down

Hosts **Ana de Almeida**  
**Mónica A. Ferreira**  
**Jelena Milosevic**  
Guests **Jonathan Skinner**  
**Julie Westerman**



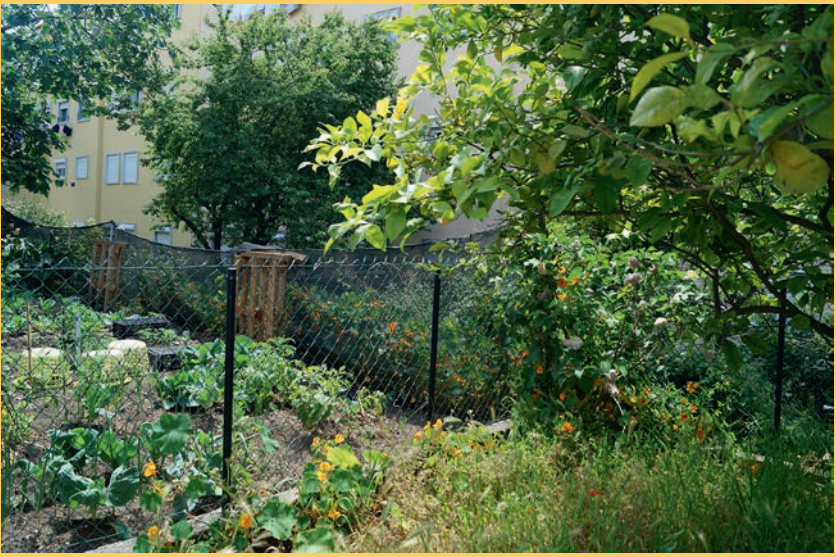


# THE FRONT AND THE BACK

Julie Westerman, Artist

The district of Alvalade is laid out in cells, a 1950’s model of order and efficiency. The residents have their needs catered for with ample public space and room to breath, a simple and safe walk to school, thriving market and a bustling main shopping street, and Hospitals and University within easy reach. The consistency of the street lay out, overarching cell structure and the pallet of a nine building types lends a sense of order to the area. However, behind the grid like structure lies a network of pathways and dirt track roads that crisscross the seemingly unregulated spaces at the rear of the blocks and link the messy and less private lives of the residents.

Each group of buildings encloses an unregulated space, of back yards and gardens, here the residents have claimed and appropriated the space, customised and utilised. This space is rich and diverse, full range of both cherished and neglected patches. Here we discover a rich tapestry of negotiated spaces that give full reign to individual creativity and urban disorder, a rich display of vernacular architecture, sheds, garages, summer houses and bunkers.



**Allotment Garden**  
20 meters by 10 secured with makeshift but effective netting and mesh, and padlocked gate. Although hard to see through the fence, the plot appears productive with flourishing crops of salad, brassicas, potatoes, onions and citrus trees. Very well tended and orderly.

**Summer House Garden**  
At the dead end of the concrete path down three concrete steps the ‘Summer House’ garden once supporting a mature grape vine.

**Caged Garden**  
The 4m x 1.5m exotic garden. This contained plot seems not to be connected by any path to the apartments. It is filled with densely planted and flourishing plants of some flair and stature. The plot is secured behind a well maintained chain link fence contains no paths or place to sit.

**Cactus Terrace**  
The area is situated on the concrete roof of storage building and is defined by rusty angle iron laced with green plastic twine and large scale rust mesh fencing. In spite of the sense of abandonment it houses a thriving and varied collection of Cacti in assorted pots.



**Bottle Brush Tree**  
Well defended plot, surrounded with 1.8 meter high fence containing a single bottle brush tree, and two upturned plant pots.

**Garage Alley**  
Rough dirt track accessible from the road and leading into a network of paths that link the backs of various apartment blocks. Each garage built with individuality and flair, employing a variety of construction methods and roof types, in various states of repair.



The unified façades of the public front face of this designed neighbourhood with its cellular structure and generous streets lends the area an atmosphere of calm, here order, unity and regulations reign. However the pathways that lead off from the end of every cul-de-sac, opens up a new view of the residents’ lives. It is here that every square inch territory has been claimed, fought for, negotiated or abandoned. It is unclear how or if the spaces have been allocated or designed. but it is possible that there is an underlying and undisclosed rule of law.

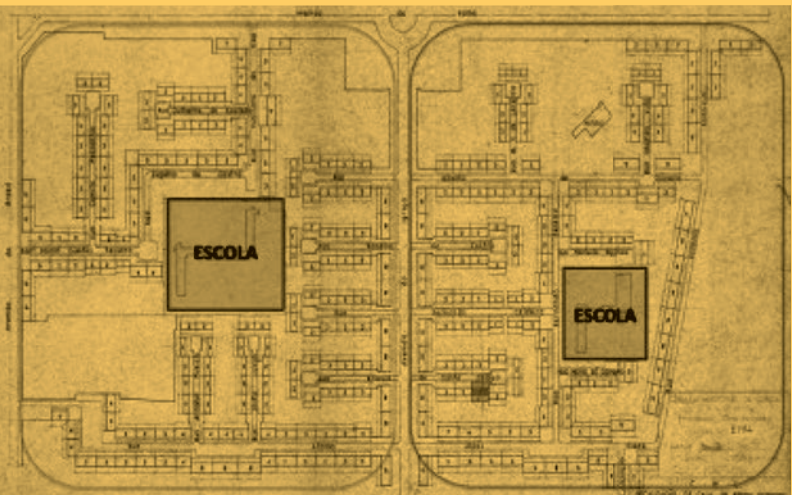
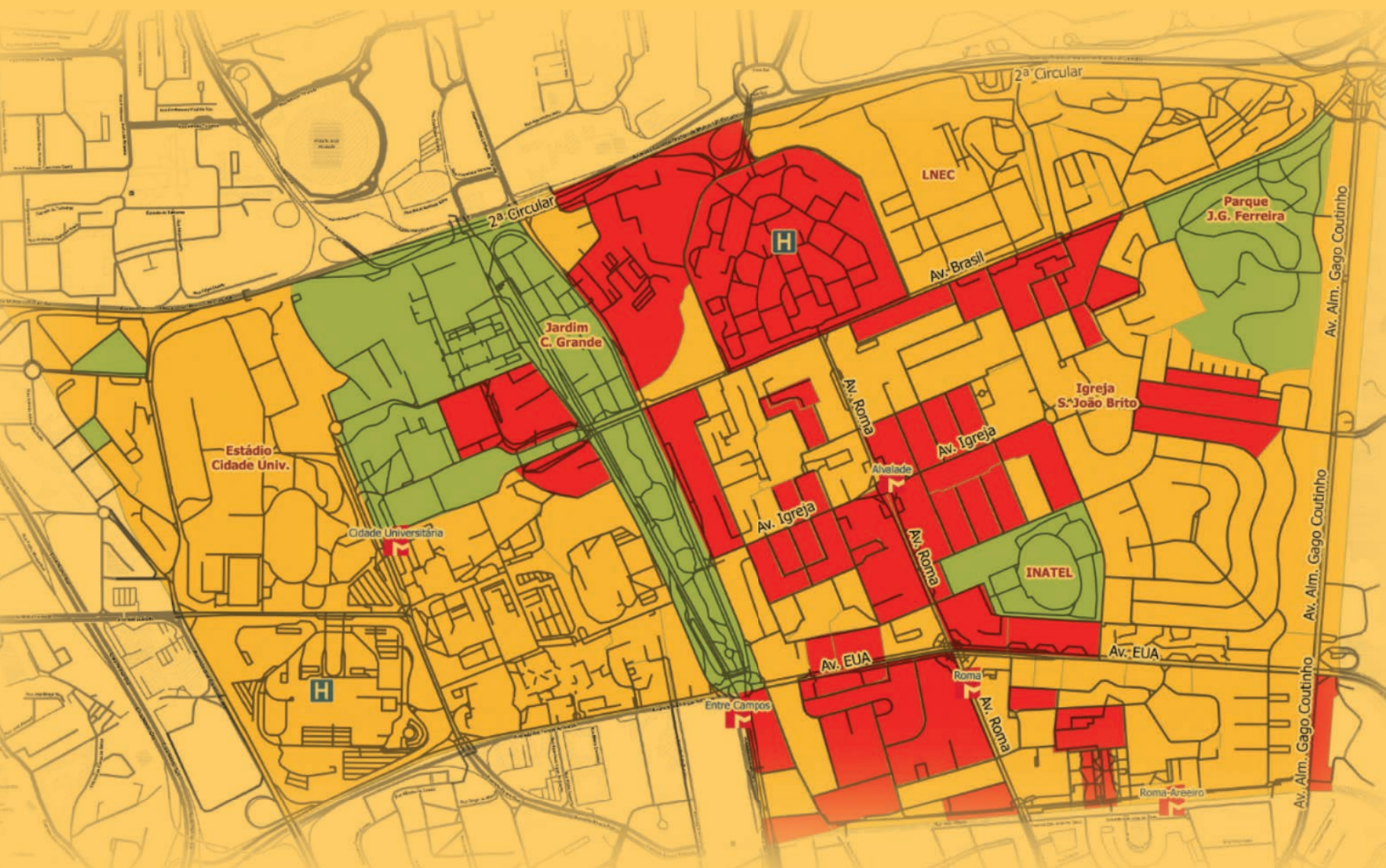
# BUILDING UP AND FALLING DOWN

Mónica Amaral Ferreira, Jelena Milosevic, Ana Simões, Civil Engineers

Earthquakes are a natural phenomena and Portugal is a country characterized by moderate to high seismic risk and but such events are infrequent and consequently the extent of earthquake threat has a low degree of awareness in the daily lives of the cities’ population.

Alvalade parish was planned in the 1930’s as consequence of Lisbon’s expansion towards the plateau on the North side of the city, and partially built in the 1950’s. The first modern Portuguese earthquake resistance regulation, the ‘Regulamento de Segurança das Construções contra os Sismos’ was issued in 1958. However, many buildings in Alvalade were constructed before these took effect, resulting in many of the buildings being vulnerable to seismic activity. The rapid development of earthquake engineering and structural safety theory have made the substitution of the 1958 seismic code and in 1983 Edifícios e Pontes”).

The beginning of the urbanization of Alvalade was designed by Architect Jacobetty Rosa. The project is based on a rectangular hierarchical grid, divided by a net of main axes defining eight cells. This approach allows the creation of ‘neighborhood units’ applying the principles of zoning, assigning each cell to specific functions. These units were designed around a central element, the primary school, not exceeding the distance of 500 meters from house to school. Pedestrian circulation is enabled by paths that cross the backyards of housing blocks.



Cells I and II plan



Building in Cell I

Cells I /II includes the program of low rental housing (between 1947-50) In these cells, nine different types of housing grouped into three series of three types each corresponding to different social levels or sizes of families.

Cell III was planned to be the commercial area of the neighborhood, designed between 1947-48 by Architect Fernando Silva .

Cell IV is a predominantly an area of single family houses in Bairro de Alvalade (excepting for the apartment buildings in Av. Rio de Janeiro) and their planning was conducted between 1948-50, according to the indications of the urban plan.

Cells V and VI built between 1949-56 is mainly economic rent houses, and this period marks the end of the construction of this type of accommodation.

Cell VII, Bairro de São Miguel, was developed between 1949-51 by Architect Jacobetty Rosa, corresponding to a very fine quality architecture developed in Alvalade The design of the buildings is similar to the design of the Economic Rent Houses; these buildings just have more spacious rooms and larger.



Building in Cell III



Building in Cell V



Building in Cell IV



Building in Cell VII